2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
Montenegrins EF5
Serbs EF6
Slavic People E16

M 754

had been stoned to death "many, many years ago." He never failed to add at least half a dozen stones and a multitude of curses to any heap we passed by the way.

M 789

Vuk Vrchevitch, in his book on old customs at minor religious festivals, collected in the Bocche di Cattaro, Montenegro, and the Herzegovina, mentions in a footnote that it was customary in the middle of the nineteenth century in Montenegro, when "a man made a statement and at once recognized he had made a mistake, to strike it on a stone (u kamen udariti). He scratched a stone with the nails of his right hand to transfer the error to the stone." As the author thought it necessary to explain this custom to Serbian readers, it is clear that the custom was a local one.

Sb 626

783

It is noteworthy that I can find no reference to swearing upon stones in old Serbian ballads, though swearing enough takes place in them.

That it is a custom of extreme antiquity there can be no doubt.

SP 771

Lavrov (*v.* Jirecek) states that the Macedonian Slavs of old worshipped trees and stones. But tree- and pillar-worship is common to very many lands and existed in the Balkans long before the advent of the Slavs. Sir Arthur Evans describes the cult at Mycenæ and Dodona (*Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxi). The oath on the stone may, therefore, belong to all and any of the Balkan people.

783 ● 627

The Northern Slavs appear to have had some such oath. Helmoldus, in his *Chronica Slavorum* (*c.* 1160), tells that they "showed great reverence to their holy places, which were frequently sacred groves or springs, and would not lightly take an oath there, lest they should be overtaken by the wrath of the avenging god." When the church at Oldenburg was built and dedicated to St. John the Baptist in 1066 by the Saxons, "the Count bade the Slavs gather in the church to hear the Word of God . . . and the Slavs were restrained in future from *swearing by trees, fountains, and stones*; they were to bring those accused of crimes to the priest to be examined by the iron or the ploughshare" (*c.* 83). The steps taken by various races to "civilize" others are very interesting. Here the Saxons evidently consider the practice of ordeal by hot iron a more Christian method than that of swearing innocence upon an object believed to be sacred by the swearer.

Helmoldus's statement shows that this ordeal was not Slavonic. We must, therefore, suppose that the hot-iron ordeal, recommended in Stefan Dushan's Code (1349) as a means of testing serfs accused of crime, was borrowed from a neighbour land. Be this as it may, the ordeal was in use in South Slav districts till well into the nineteenth century.

A 783 627

Swearing on a stone has survived only in Albania as a means of self-justification; and it is not impossible that it has existed from